

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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With the arrival of spring and the greening of lawns, now is a good time to apply fertilizer. Before you do, you may want to have a soil test completed in order to know what nutrients are needed. Once you know what is needed, choose fertilizers that contain slow release nitrogen. This will be listed on the bag as sulfur-coated urea, methylene urea, IBDU, triazone or as a natural organic fertilizer. Do not apply more than one pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet. For example, if you are using a fertilizer with an analysis of 20-5-10, you would need to apply five pounds per 1000 square feet (This analysis means the bag contains 20% nitrogen (N), 5% phosphorus (P₂O₅) and 10% potassium (K₂O); therefore 5 lbs fertilizer times 20% N = 1 pound actual nitrogen). be sure to clean up any that land on the sidewalk or driveway in order to prevent it from running off into the sewer system. This will help protect our water resources. Runoff from turf grass is minimal.

The need for weed control in the spring depends on the condition of your lawn. If you have a thick stand of turf grass, weed control may not be necessary. However, if your lawn has a history of crabgrass infestation you may want to use a pre emergence herbicide. Crabgrass germination normally occurs when soil temperatures reach 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Spring time is not a good time to control dandelions because they are translocating carbohydrates to their leaves. Herbicide applications will burn the shoots but may not destroy the roots. To control broadleaves, such as dandelions, apply broadleaf herbicides in summer and fall.

If you want to seed a lawn this spring or renovate thin areas, it is possible to do but it needs to be done properly. Consider the following points. Take a soil test and incorporate any recommended lime or nutrients. Select the right seed for the site. For sunny areas use one of the improved varieties of Kentucky bluegrass and for shady areas use either a fine fescue or tall fescue but do not mix the fine and tall fescue. Sow 1.5 pounds of Kentucky bluegrass, 6 pounds of tall fescue or 3 pounds of fine leaf fescue per 1000 square feet. Do not seed until later in April because the seed will not germinate until the soil warms to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Consider using a starter fertilizer that contains Tupersan to prevent crabgrass germination. Use one bale of weed free straw per 1000 square feet to reduce erosion and maintain moisture for germination. Keep the seed bed moist with frequent light irrigation. Always read and follow label directions before applying any fertilizer, herbicide or seed to your lawn.

For additional questions on spring lawn care, please call the Grundy Office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.